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BOOK DEPARTMENT.

REVIEWS.

American Street Railway Investments. A supplement to the *Street Railway Journal*. Pp. 155. Published annually. New York: Street Railway Publishing Co., 1894.

Manual of American Water-Works, 1890-91. Edited by M. N. BAKER, Ph.B. Pp. 384. Price, \$3.00. New York: Engineering News Publishing Co., 1892.

Students of municipal administration and finance have complained, and not without justification, of the lack of trustworthy material. The various year-books, annuals and manuals, published by foreign cities, have been held up to us as models of concise statement and scientific arrangement, both as regards the financial and administrative facts of municipal development. Although very few of our larger cities have as yet attempted such a compilation, the increasing comprehensiveness of the regular department reports soon promises to give us adequate material for the pursuit of monographic work, from which alone we are to expect the solution of some of the most difficult of our problems.

During the last few years a number of manuals and compendia have appeared which, although attracting but comparatively little attention outside the circles immediately interested, contain some of the most valuable information concerning the condition of our municipalities. Perhaps the most instructive feature common to all is the readiness with which the material lends itself to comparative study.

“American Street Railway Investments” gives us information concerning more than one thousand street railway companies operating in upwards of six hundred cities and towns. For cities of 50,000 inhabitants and more, such additional statistics are given as will give a general idea of their financial condition and industrial development. A large number of maps tracing the street railway systems in the larger cities add both to the interest and value of the work.

As regards any general conclusions which this vast fund of statistics may warrant, it can hardly be said that they are either numerous or very important. This is due to the one grave defect of an otherwise model publication, namely, the absence of all information concerning the relations existing between the public transportation companies and their respective municipalities. The book was not intended for students of the subject; but even from the standpoint of the investor

one would very naturally suppose that the great differences in the method of dealing with such companies would be very material to any question of financial standing. There can be but one explanation to this almost inexcusable omission, namely, that American municipalities, as a rule, impose few financial burdens upon street railway companies, and even where the contractual obligations seem to indicate an adequate return for the franchises granted, such obligations are seldom enforced.

One fact which is brought out with unmistakable clearness is the rapid process of consolidation which is concentrating the street railway lines in all our great cities in the hands of a few large corporations. Thus, in Philadelphia, two companies control 297 of the total of 372 miles of street railway; in New York, 213 of a total of 396. That this consolidation will greatly simplify the question of municipal control over such companies there can be no question. That it is for the moment favorable to an undue abuse of power by these gigantic corporations is no less a matter of universal experience. Without entering into any discussion of probable future development, the clear recognition of our present condition with all its advantages and abuses is the first step toward a more rational and economic solution of the problem of transportation by our municipalities. We must first grasp its purely financial bearings. The questions of social policy are for a subsequent period in our development.

The volume on "American Water-Works," of which the first number appeared in 1888, performs the same service for this department of municipal government as does the above work for the question of public transportation. Nearly 2000 cities and towns are included with almost every variety of municipal and private ownership. The information concerning the water supply in our larger cities indicates an initial sacrifice of natural facilities with subsequent attempts to regain the ground lost through these errors. The vast range of territory covered will naturally make this work a guide to more detailed research rather than a storehouse of available material.

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Restrictions upon Local and Special Legislation in State Constitutions. By CHARLES CHAUNCEY BINNEY. Pp. 195. Price, \$1.50. Philadelphia: Kay & Bros., 1894.

Rudolph von Gneist, in his "Self-government" ("Kommunalnerfassung und Verwaltungsgerichte"), speaks of the influence of the English judiciary on the development of local institutions in England. The history of political institutions in the United States is, in